

MINUTE OF MEETING

Baluss Farm, Mintlaw Liaison Group

**Mintlaw Academy, Mintlaw
30 April 2015**

Present: Margaret Grant, Joyce Munro - Residents
David Coull, Alexander Laird - Mintlaw & District Community Council
Councillor Norman Smith, Councillor Jim Ingram
Sandy Howie - Baluss Farm
Andy McGowan - Scottish Pig Producers Ltd
David Cooper - Environmental Health Manager
Chris White - Buchan Area Manager (Chair)

Apologies: Councillors Edie Chapman and Lenny Pirie
John Grant - Environmental Health Team Manager

1. Introduction

Chris White welcomed all to meeting. Round table introductions.

2. Purpose of Group

Chris White advised that the meeting provided an opportunity to discuss concerns and work together to identify practical solutions. All agreed.

3. Community Concerns

Representatives of residents, Community Council and Councillors were given the opportunity to raise issues. It was confirmed that odour is the main concern - from the farm itself, and from slurry spreading. Reference was also made to the number of flies affecting some properties; it was acknowledged that a link to the farm could not be confirmed and also that other areas of Aberdeenshire had also experienced problems. Numerous complaints received during recent slurry spreading. It was acknowledged that slurry spreading has to be undertaken but residents are more concerned about the ongoing odour issues outwith slurry spreading. The odour can vary in frequency, length of time and geographic extent.

Margaret Grant enquired about the potential health impacts from emissions to air. Andy McGowan and David Cooper indicated no health concerns.

It was agreed that wind direction and topography will influence the extent of odour affecting the area.

David Coull indicated the matter had been raised at the Community Council.

4. Steps taken by Baluss Farm

Mr Howie outlined the steps he has taken in recent years to mitigate against the impact of odour emissions. Various mitigation measures have been investigated and implemented:

- Slurry collection and storage methods
- Best practice being used across operations to a standard that would meet SEPA's PPC requirements(although PPC licence not required at Baluss)
- Slurry spreading method
- Ventilation to buildings is comparable to the highest standards in UK and Europe
- 2 layers of aerocover provided on slurry tank, which has been checked and re-checked by the company
- Discharge pipe to slurry tank extended
- Detailed records kept of farm activities, which can be compared against times of complaints
- Currently trialling a product called Slurrycell which may help reduce odour
- A consultant nutritionist has checked pig's diets, to ensure no excess protein
- Employed environmental consultants to monitor emissions; very low levels of ammonia detected, well below guidelines.

Mr Howie advised that he has fully cooperated with Environmental Health responding to all notifications of odour complaint.

He does not dispute that there will be odour issues at certain times, but this is strongly influenced by wind direction and strength, and topography.

Andy McGowan advised he is not aware of similar complaints elsewhere in Scotland, and said the farm meets standards expected in countries such as Holland and Denmark.

Mr Howie indicated that slurry spreading is undertaken in the second half of April and second half of September each year, although the actual start and finish dates will vary. He is also to employ an injection system in September which should minimise odour.

5. Role of Aberdeenshire Council

David Cooper advised of the involvement of the Environmental Health Service:

- Investigating complaints in terms of the Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Responding to complaints by visiting area and regular contact with Mr Howie
- Have carried out survey of farm and slurry spreading methods

- Two Abatement Notices served in 2014, covering slurry storage and slurry spreading
- Commissioned a survey of the farm by the Scottish Agricultural College. The SAC advise the farm is well managed, meets standards expected of premises that require to meet PPC requirements and highlighted a number of areas of best practice. The report has not identified any areas for improvement. It said odour issues may be the result of the close proximity of the farm to housing, weather conditions and topography, the latter two perhaps creating turbulence which may explain why the odour can be short-lived and/or limited in extent

6. Actions

1. It was agreed that steps require to be taken to try and identify the source of the odour. Consequently, monitoring information is required from both residents and Baluss Farm to help determine the source of the odour. Environmental Health has drafted a diary template that can be completed by residents; David Cooper will enquire through the Council's IT Service how this can be accessed eg surveymonkey.
2. Mr Howie agreed to visit the residents on the Liaison Group when they are being affected by the odour.
3. Environmental Health will speak to SAC regarding any measures that could be considered with regard to the ventilation system and the weather impacts.
4. Mr Howie will check ventilation system to ensure it is working effectively.
5. Mr Howie will continue to use Slurrycell.
6. Environmental Health will provide updates to the local community.
7. Environmental Health will continue to respond to complaints and will maintain regular contact with complainants and Mr Howie.
8. Environmental Health will discuss outcome of the Liaison Group with the Council solicitor,
9. Draft Minutes of Meeting to be circulated, and made public once all are satisfied.

7. AOCB

No issues raised.

8. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that a further meeting may be convened after the summer.